

# Education Differed In Two Regions

The differences between lowcountry and upcountry South Carolinians have historically been sharp and of such magnitude that the citizens might as well have lived in different states or regions. With the emergence of a standard "mass culture" in America, the differences have considerably diminished.

One of the root differences between the two sections of the state before the Civil War was in the nature of formal education. Upcountry and lowcountry youths were educated by different methods, and by a different breed of instructor.

Upperclass lowcountry youth, when very young, were usually educated by private tutors employed by their parents. They received basic reading, writing and arithmetic instruction and also studied literature, art, music, dancing, and were introduced to modern and classical languages.

When the children of Charleston, Georgetown, and Beaufort-based plantation owners were 13 or 14, they were separated and the girls attended "finishing" schools and the boys went to college, usually in England. In the colonial period, if the boy expected to practice law or participate in government affairs, he was invariably sent to one of the London Inns of Court. South Carolina attendance there outnumbered all of the other colonies. The practice of studying abroad continued after the Revolution.

Upcountry youths, in contrast, usually received their first schooling at the nearest meeting house with the minister serving as teacher. The most promising of the youths were then sent to an "academy," usually a boarding school. Few upcountry boys went abroad, although a few (girls, too) boarded in Charleston and attended school with the Charlestonians.

Of all the upcountry academies, Willington, which practiced few of

## South Carolina's Story The making of a state



the lowcountry tenets of education, was the most interesting.

Dr. Moses Waddel founded Willington Academy in 1804 in Abbeville County. The school was located in a pine forest on a ridge high enough to escape malaria.

There were two teachers, and Waddel taught the older boys. The academy building was a simple log structure with two large rooms. One was Waddel's recitation hall. It had no seats, and when the boys were called en masse to Waddel, they stood, up to 150 at one time, packed like sardines to recite their lessons.

The boys lived on a street of huts usually constructed by themselves, although occasionally a father sent along an "architect" with his son. The rows of huts usually had chimneys of wood. Pine torches provided light. There the youths studied their assignments until signaled by a horn. Classes were titled by the classical author being studied at the moment so that there was the Homer class, the Virgil class, etc.

Judge A.B. Longstreet's account of his study of Willington informs us that the students were diligent. They rose at dawn, ate simple fare, studied all day until called for recitation, where they were examined closely. The students were made aware of the grammar,

syntax, history and geography of Greece and Rome, and to appreciate beauty of expression.

Looking back, we must marvel that the completely impractical (by this century's terms) curriculum accomplished so much. There were no organized sports, but to the boys, on their own, found recreation in running, jumping, wrestling and playing town-ball and bull-pen. The older boys were allowed to hunt squirrels, turkeys and other game. About 1810 the hunting privileges were taken away because town boys started arriving in large numbers and abused the privilege.

Later analysts of the Willington enrollment point out that noe of the South Carolina and Georgia "town boys" became distinguished leaders, while virtually all the country boys did. Waddel's students were generally admitted to the junior class of the best colleges and of the country-boy ranks came a vice president, John C. Calhoun, and many foreign ministers, Cabinet ministers, senators, congressmen, governors and judges. They also became presidents and professors of colleges, eminent divines, barristers, jurists, legislators, physicians, scholars and military officers. Dr. Waddel, himnself, went on to become president of Franklin College, which later became the University of Georgia.